

REMARKS

Claims 11, 13, 16-18, and 23-34 are amended above. Claims 12 and 14 are cancelled. Following entry of the above amendment, claims 11, 13, and 15-34 are pending. The Action withdrew claims 27-34 previously as because they were “constructively elected by original presentation for prosecution on the merits.” With the filing of this RCE, this restriction is traversed and claims 27-34 are presented for examination on the merits.

The Action rejected claims 11-26 as obvious under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over U.S. Pat. No. 6,290,621 to Ichida and U.S. Pat. No. 4,618,333 to Nagano. Neither reference, taken alone or combined, discloses or suggests what is now claimed.

Ichida (U.S. Pat. No. 6,290,621) discloses a rear derailleur having pivot pins 58 secured by open-ended retaining clips 78. The open ended retaining clips 78 engage the pivot pins 58, but do not surround them. Surrounding the clips would make the clip's 78 removal impossible. Ichida's retaining clips 78 are removed from the pivot pins by sliding them perpendicular to the axis of the pin 58 (clip installation is the opposite of removal); again, if the clips surrounded Ichida's pin, this perpendicular removal would not be possible.

Ichida does not show or suggest a “retaining member comprised of an annular portion *that defines an enclosed interior space*” or a “retaining member comprised of a continuous annular portion *that defines an enclosed interior space*” as claimed in

independent claims 11 and 23. The Action refers to Ichida Figure 6 as anticipating the claimed snap-action engagement portion. Ichida Figure 6 however, at best merely shows an *open-ended* retaining clip that does not define an enclosed interior space as is now claimed.

Nagano (U.S. Pat. No. 4,618,333) discloses an annular sealing member 20, having an X-shaped cross-section, used to protect a link pin 10 from contamination by dirt and debris. See Col. 3, lines 45-49. The annular sealing member 20 wraps around the pin to seal the linkage- not to hold it in place. The sealing member 20 would be inadequate for this purpose because the annular sealing member 20 is made of a soft material "composed mainly of nitrile rubber." Col. 3, line 19. Nagano does not disclose a pin having "at least one annular groove" as claimed in independent claims 11 and 23. Nagano does not show or suggest a pin with a groove (see Nagano Figures 3 and 4 that show pins with no grooves). Nagano does not show or suggest a "retaining member" with "snap-action portions" that "removably retain said at least one pin in a selected position" when the snap-action portions engage the annular groove of said at least one pin as is claimed in claims 11 and 23. Nagano shows only a rubber seal- which has no engagement portions, and certainly has no "snap-action."

Since Nagano neither teaches nor suggests the claimed pin or member, it does not show or suggest that “snap-action portions” and their relationship with the pin as claimed in claims 11 and 23.

The Action’s combination of Ichida and Nagano is improper. Both references fail to teach several elements and limitations in the claims individually. Even the combination of references, which the Applicant believes improper (see below), fails to disclose or suggest what is now claimed. For instance, a pin could not be driven through the E-style retaining clip 78 disclosed by Ichida to cause it to mate with an annular groove of the pin. The E-style retaining 78 clip can only be installed by pushing it onto a pin in a direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the pin. In contrast, Nagano’s sealing member could only be wrapped around the pin by inserting the pin through the member. Where Ichida teaches a clip that can only be pressed onto the pin in a direction perpendicular to the pin’s axis, Nagano teaches a washer that slips on the pin in a direction longitudinal to the pin’s axis. Since the patents have incompatible teaching, their combination is improper. One skilled in the art would not be motivated to modify the teachings of Ichida with Nagano, or with the knowledge available to those skilled in the art, to assemble Applicant’s invention. Even if one of ordinary skill would be capable of combining a set of references, the prior art must suggest the desirability of such a combination. *In re Mills*, 916 F.2d 680, 16 USPQ2d (Fed. Cir. 1990).

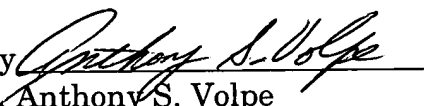
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Application No.: 09/991,923

In view of the forgoing, claims 11, 13, and 15-34 are believed to be patentable over the prior art and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

If for any reason the Examiner believes that an interview, either telephonically or in person, would advance prosecution of the application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned to arrange an interview.

Respectfully submitted,

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